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Brian R Naranjo 01/08/2002 09:22:15 AM From DB/Inbox: Brian R Naranjo

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TELEGRAM

January 07, 2002

Chron

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - ROUTINE  
Action: INR  
From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS 15 - ROUTINE)  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE  
Captions: None  
Subject: THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
Ref: A) CARACAS 3730; B) CARACAS 0011

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(D), B6

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR DONNA J. HRINAK. REASONS 1.5 (B & D).

REF: A) CARACAS 3730; B) CARACAS 0011

1. (C) SUMMARY: Chavez loyalists continue to control the direction of the National Assembly (AN), but not without political cost. After a heated and lengthy session on Saturday January 5, William Lara (Fifth Republic Movement-MVR) retained the presidency of the National Assembly with 85 out of 165 possible votes.

END SUMMARY.

LARA RETAINS ASSEMBLY PRESIDENCY, JUST

2. (U) Chavez loyalists continue to control the direction of the National Assembly (AN), but not without political cost. After a heated and lengthy session on Saturday January 5, William Lara (Fifth Republic Movement-MVR) retained the presidency of the National Assembly with 85 out of 165 possible votes. Rafael Simon Jimenez, leader of the dissident wing of the MAS, won the First Vice-presidency, replacing his MAS rival Leopoldo Puchi, and Noeli Pocatererra of the Indigenous Party won the Second Vice-presidency, replacing Gerardo Saer of Project Venezuela. This result was achieved after a nearly-successful effort by the self-styled "opposition bloc" to secure votes for a ticket headed by Alberto Jordan Hernandez, leader of one of the MVR's dissident groups in the AN.

3. (U) The backing of the "revolutionary" Jordan Hernandez (Ref. A) was clearly designed to split the MVR vote. Nine opposition parties demonstrated impressive unity in carrying out this strategy, including former Chavez allies in the MAS and the New Times party. Moreover, the "swing vote" of the Project Venezuela bloc decided to abandon another go at the Second Vice-presidency to send Chavez a message. But the "divide and conquer" strategy failed as no MVR members defected to Jordan Hernandez's cause (two abstained and two were absent.) In a fit of pique, Chavez promptly expelled Jordan Hernandez from the MVR on his weekend radio program.

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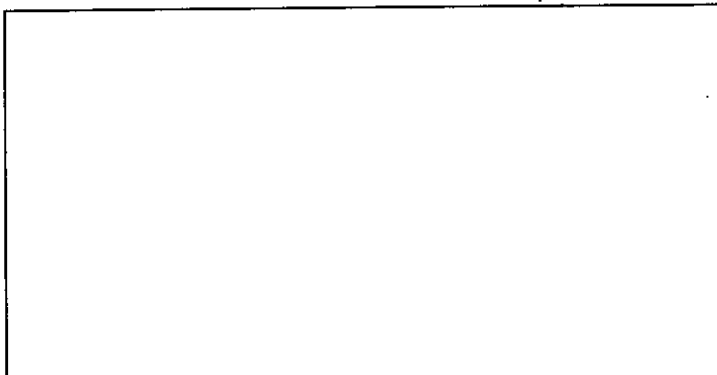
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4. (U) Although defeated, the opposition was encouraged by the results. "This is clearly a victory for us," said

\_\_\_\_\_ told PolOff on January

7. Now the MVR and its allies command only a simple majority; any initiative by Chavez that requires a super majority will be difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, the MVR and friends will lose two of their ten AN committees, with important committees, such as internal political affairs or finances, passing to the opposition leadership. We can expect much wrangling in the Coordinating Committee in the coming week or so to determine exactly who gets what.



HRINAK

Additional Addressees:  
None

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